

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /092 W

-----104547 101101Z /15

R 100810Z JAN 78

FM AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 542

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

USCINCEUR

COMIDEASTFOR

C O N F I D E N T I A L DJIBOUTI 0030

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PDIP, PINS, ASEC, DJ

SUBJ: DJIBOUTI POLITICAL SITUATION AND ETHNIC POLITICS

REF: DJIBOUTI 770

1. SUMMARY. ALTHOUGH NO END TO THE GOVERNMENT CRISIS IS IN SIGHT, THE INTENSIVE EFFORTS BY THE DIPLOMATIC COMMUNITY IN DJIBOUTI TO PERSUADE PRESIDENT GOULED TO LESSEN PRESSURES ON THE AFAR COMMUNITY AND REBUILD BRIDGES SERVED TO INDICATE THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DJIBOUTI STABILITY TO THE REGION. IT IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY APPARENT THAT PRESIDENT GOULED IS SURROUNDED BY POOR ADVISORS WHO RUSH IN EVERY TIME SOMEONE COUNSELS MODERATION TO THE PRESIDENT IN ORDER TO KEEP UP
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PRESSURES ON THE AFARS. FORMER PRIME MINISTER DINI HAS INDICATED THAT HE WILL MEET THE PRESIDENT ANYWHERE, ANYTIME. THE PRESIDENT HAS THUS FAR NOT RESPONDED, AND AS HE GOES OFF FOR A SHORT TOUR OF THE PERSIAN GULF ON 10 JAN, HE LEAVES BEHIND A COUNTRY WHICH IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY PERPLEXED AT HIS LACK OF ACTION, ONE WAY OR THE OTHER.

2. POLITICS IN DJIBOUTI REVOLVES AROUND A HANDFUL OF PEOPLE, ALL OF WHOM HAVE KNOWN EACH OTHER VIRTUALLY SINCE CHILDHOOD. EVERYONE IS SOMEHOW RELATED TO EVERYONE ELSE, EITHER BY BLOOD OR BY MARRIAGE. GROUP THESE PEOPLE TOGETHER, PLACE THEM ON THE GREAT AMERICAN PLAINS, STAND BACK, AND YOU WOULD HAVE THE TYPICAL SMALL TOWN. NEITHER SIDE CAN AGREE WHO LIVES ON THE WRONG SIDE OF THE TRACKS; EACH SIDE REMEMBERS ALL OF THE SLIGHTS AND INJURIES DONE AGAINST THEM BY THE OTHER SIDE FOR THE PAST 100 YEARS. PERSONALITIES, NOT IDEOLOGY, NOT WEALTH, NOT EVEN POSITIONS COUNT. THE TWO CURRENT LEADING PERSONALITIES ARE HASSAN GOULED AND AHMED DINI. BOTH ARE NOW STANDING ON PRINCIPLE AND NEITHER REALLY WANTS TO STAND DOWN.

3. FOREIGN MINISTER ABDALLAH KAMIL IS PESSIMISTIC. IN THE PAST TWO WEEKS, SINCE HIS RETURN FROM THE ABIDJAN FRANCOPHONE CONFERENCE, HE HAS BECOME THE INTERMEDIARY BETWEEN THE AFARS IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (A GROUP WHICH CONTINUES TO INCLUDE AS MEMBERS THOSE MINISTERS WHO RESIGNED) AND THE PRESIDENT. THE AFAR PARLIAMENTARY GROUP HAS STATED THAT THE MINIMUM CONCESSIONS IT WILL ACCEPT TO CONTINUE WORKING WITH THE GOVERNMENT ARE THE FOLLOWING:

--- PROVISION THAT THE PRIME MINISTRY BE ACCORDED SOME REAL POWER (NATURALLY, WITH AN AFAR IN THE POST)

--- PARITY IN MEMBERSHIP WITH SOMALIS IN THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT

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LISHMENT

--- RELEASE FROM DETENTION OF THOSE PEOPLE NOT DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN TERRORIST ACTIVITIES.

THE FOREIGN MINISTER, WHO NOW REPRESENTED THE ONLY BRIDGE BETWEEN THE TWO RIVAL ETHNIC GROUPS AT THE OFFICIAL LEVEL, HAS NOT BEEN ABLE TO SURMOUNT THE GANG OF SOMALI ETHNIC VIGILANTES AROUND THE PRESIDENT. CURIOUSLY, THE MAJOR NEMESIS FOR THE AFARS IS A MYSTERIOUS FRENCH ADVISOR, FIRST NAME UNKNOWN, A MAITRE PINET, WHO IS A LEFTOVER FROM DAYS OF FORMER HIGH COMMISSIONER D'ORNANO, A WELL-KNOWN SOCIALIST. MAITRE PINET IS THE ARCHITECT OF THE ORIGINAL DRAFT PRE-AMBLE TO THE CONSTITUTION AND THE ORIGINAL GOVERNMENT PLAN IN WHICH THE PRIME MINISTER POSITION WAS GIVEN NO POWER. I HAVE YET TO MEET ANYONE IN THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS WHO HAS MET MAITRE PINET OR CAN PROVIDE MUCH BACKGROUND ON HIM. IN ANY CASE, HE APPARENTLY IS HELD IN GREAT REGARD BY THE PRESIDENT AND IS CONSIDERED TO BE THE EMINENCE GRISE OF THE REGIME.

4. PUSHED BY HIS ADVISORS, THE PRESIDENT IS UNWILLING TO ACCEPT QTE CONDITIONS UNQTE FROM THE AFAR PARLIAMENTARY GROUP.

HE AGREED IN PRINCIPLE TO A MEETING WITH AHMED DINI, BUT MOST PEOPLE SUSPECT THAT HE HAS NOT PROVIDED A DATE FOR SUCH A MEETING BECAUSE HE WOULDN'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY. THE PRESIDENT HAS NO CLEAR IDEA HOW TO GET OUT OF THE MESS HE IS IN, AND FROM MY OWN EXPERIENCE, HE IS NOT TOO INTERESTED IN HEARING ABOUT SOLUTIONS FROM OUTSIDERS.

5. FOR THE FIRST TIME, THE EMBASSY HAS BEGUN TO HEAR ABOUT FEARS OF A COUP AGAINST THE PRESIDENT. FRANKLY, WE HAVE NO IDEA WHO MIGHT LEAD SUCH AN ENDEAVOR. THE ONLY CONCEIVABLE CANDIDATE MIGHT BE THE GENDARMERIE CHIEF WHO LEFT THE COUNTRY ABOUT ONE WEEK BEFORE THE PALMIER EN ZINC DISASTER FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT. HOWEVER, SUCH A SOLUTION WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO CONTROL BECAUSE WHATEVER POWER MIGHT BE AVAILABLE IN THE CONFIDENTIAL

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GENDARMERIE IS CERTAINLY MORE THAN BALANCED BY THE SOMALI MAJORITY IN THE ARMY.

6. THE PRESIDENT GOES OFF ON ANOTHER TRIP, THIS TIME FOR THREE DAYS TO THE PERSIAN GULF. ARAB DIPLOMATS TELL ME THAT HE WILL RECEIVE MORE LESSONS FROM HIS HOSTS ABOUT THE NEED FOR NATIONAL UNITY. HOWEVER, THE INITIATIVE IS NOW ENTIRELY UP TO THE PRESIDENT, AND IT IS FOR HIM TO DECIDE HOW TO HOLD HIS COUNTRY TOGETHER.

CLARKE

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